

## HELP YOUTH TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

### Goal 1.2C: Engage 1.5 million youth in School-to-Work (STW) activities.

**Results:** The number of secondary school youth engaged in School-to-Work activities was 1,055,775 in Program Year 1997, a decline from the previous year's total of 1,265,549. Participation is defined as the number of youth involved in STW classes in which traditional academic subjects are complemented by career-related instruction. Due to the lag in data collection, the most recent data available is for Program Year 1997, ending June 30, 1998, and covers 38 States. The next installment of data expected in July 2000 will include progress for the 1998-1999 school year.

**Program Description:** The School-to-Work Opportunities Act established a national framework within which States and other grantees (such as Urban and Rural Opportunity Grantees) are creating STW systems. The program goal is to increase academic achievement, improve technical skills, broaden career opportunities, and prepare all students for high-skill, high-wage

occupations. The STW initiative provides venture capital to support grantees in building their STW systems.

**Analysis of Results:** The causes of the decline in overall numbers are difficult to identify. A contributing factor is that the response rate from local partnerships that report these data declined to 76 percent from 81 percent in 1997. Data supplied by local partnerships is self-reported and voluntary; local partnerships are not required by law to report any data to the Department. These data reflect only the first 38 States that received STW implementation grants.

The indicator used for School-to-Work, the number of students participating in STW activities, also serves as a proxy for the extent to which the STW initiative is promoting education reform and helping to improve the workforce development system across the country. Though this figure has declined, other positive results stem from STW efforts:

- Academic achievement: The percent of students who took at least three years each of math and



A former work experience trainee,  
enjoys her new full-time job.

science rose from 69 percent in 1996 to 74 percent in 1998.

- Transition from high school: In 1996, 87 percent of high school graduates in STW systems successfully transitioned into either college, employment, or the military.

The most recent data also show that:

- 25 percent of high schools have implemented key STW components (defined as offering career major programs that require an extended workplace activity).
- 109,251 employers are providing work-based learning experiences for students.

The National School-to-Work Office (NSTWO) continues to collect best practices from around the country and frequently updates these practices on an STW website. These examples not only illustrate the progress being made under STW but also provide practical assistance to professionals in the field as they try to develop innovative and effective STW systems in their localities.

### Strategies:

- A streamlined, more focused questionnaire covering the 1998-1999 school year was developed and distributed to partnerships in all 52 States and territories reporting. With nationwide reporting, a complete accounting should be available of DOL's success in achieving the FY 2000 goal of engaging two million youth in STW activities.
- Provide technical assistance and resources to help grantees develop and sustain STW systems. Assistance includes: sponsoring a national information center;

hosting intensive STW system-building institutes; identifying exemplary STW models and promising practices; and helping to identify sources of support for States to sustain their STW systems after the Federal legislation expires in 2001.

- Provide leadership for strategies that support State and local STW system-building, such as: integrating curriculum and linking work-based learning with school-based learning; aligning post-secondary admissions policies with new methods of assessing high school student performance; and increasing the ability of teachers to use STW approaches in their instructional methods.
- Provide grants to employer and labor intermediary organizations to increase the number of employers providing intensive work-based learning opportunities that are connected to students' academic and technical course work.

### Goal Assessment and Future Plans:

The goal for FY 2000 is to engage two million youth in school-to-work activities. ■

## HELP YOUTH IN HIGH-POVERTY AREAS OBTAIN JOBS

**Goal 1.2D:** During the initial year of program operations, 25,000 out-of-school youth will be served in Youth Opportunity Areas.

**Results:** As of September 30, 1999, the six pilot Youth Opportunity sites have enrolled 4,392 youth and have placed 2,681. These figures include enrollments and placements for the past two years under these pilot efforts. In FY 1999, these six sites enrolled 1,763 youth and placed 1,768. The original performance goal for FY 1999 assumed funding at an earlier stage for a larger, fully-established program.



Youth in Philadelphia help restore an old building with a fresh coat of paint while enrolled in the Youth Works Program.

**Program Description:** The Department's Youth Opportunity grants are aimed at increasing the long-term employment of youth who live in Empowerment Zones (EZ), Enterprise Communities (EC), and other high-poverty areas. These grants funnel funds directly into urban and rural areas where the employment efforts are most needed. Although the focus of the initiative is on increasing employment, other goals include reducing dropout rates and teen pregnancy, increasing enrollment in post-secondary education, and decreasing crime.

DOL also expects to improve systems in poor communities for serving at-risk youth.

The Youth Opportunity initiative has a strong private sector emphasis. Grantees use case managers and job developers to place and maintain youth in private sector jobs. Job training, work experience, and education slots will be available for youth not ready for private sector placement. Youth will be placed in jobs throughout their cities, not just in their target neighborhoods. Partnerships will be emphasized with local public school districts, community colleges, universities, and faith-based organizations. Community ownership will be encouraged through community advisory boards and the involvement of parents, residents, and local business owners in program activities. Youth Opportunity grants will also focus on responsible behavior and personal accountability on the part of enrollees.

**Analysis of Results:** Funding for the Youth Opportunity grants was not available in time for the program to serve any youth during FY 1999 except in the pilot sites. The grant solicitation was announced on June 2, 1999. In February 2000, the Department awarded Youth Opportunity grants to 36 high-poverty urban, rural, and Native American communities to provide education and job training opportunities to young people.

**Strategies:** The FY 1999 Youth Opportunity performance goal focused on numbers of youth served. Because Youth Opportunity grants were not awarded fully until February 2000 and sites will go through a planning phase that will last until August, there will only be

one month of full operations of Youth Opportunity programs in FY 2000. Thus, the performance goal for FY 2000 will necessarily focus on initiating new projects and enrolling youth. The FY 2001 goal will address more substantive results.

**Goal Assessment and Future Plans:**

The FY 2000 goal reflects the start-up status of the Youth Opportunity grant program. All sites will be operational and will collectively enroll 3,000 youth by the end of FY 2000. In FY 2001 when the program is fully operational, the goal for the Youth Opportunity initiative will focus on outcomes rather than outputs. DOL plans to place 75 percent of participants exiting the program in employment, the military, advanced training, post-secondary education, or apprenticeships and supporting the retention of those opportunities for at least six months. ■



One of ER's stars, Eriq LaSalle, supporting a recent graduate of the Kulick Program during a roll-out of the YO! Public Service Announcements Event at the WattStar Theater in Los Angeles.